

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this thesis provides a brief description of the research, including the background of the study, the purposes, the research questions, and the significance of the study as well as the scope of the study to give an overview of what the study is about and aiming to achieve. This chapter also gives a clarification of terms to avoid misunderstanding as well as the organization of the study to give a clearer structure of the thesis.

1. 1 Background of the Study

English is widely recognized as an international language (see McKay, 2002; Sharifian, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011; McKay & Brown 2016; McKay, 2018). The language has been employed globally in various fields such as information, education, technology, and economy. In Indonesia, particularly, English has played in society in terms of business, politics, education, and media (Lauder, 2008). The extremely widespread use of English demands people to have English proficiency, particularly for a better prospect in the future, such as to have academic success and to work in a high-profile company. Due to these reasons, English has been playing an important role in Indonesian education.

English has become the first foreign language that should be studied in schools in Indonesia (Lauder, 2008). In secondary schools, English is put as a compulsory subject that should be studied by the students. The language is also commonly employed at university levels where the students are assigned to read some texts in English. Furthermore, English has also been studying in some primary schools in Indonesia. The implementation of English learning in primary schools emerges as a result of the decentralization of education which encourages local governments to use some slots of the assign learning hours for local contents (Jalal & Musthafa, 2001 as

cited in Musthafa, 2010). Since then, the number of primary schools that offer English keeps increasing along with the public interest in learning English early.

Public interest in English learning in primary schools relies on several reasons. Firstly, some people believe that children have more opportunities to master or to have better language acquisition. For example, young English learners are argued to have the ability to reproduce English accent and pronunciation with deadly accuracy (see Valipour & Asl, 2014). Secondly, children are also argued to have the potential to learn a new culture through the language (British Council, 2007; Pinter, 2006). Thirdly, English can also contribute to the advancement of language competence of the children (Pinter, 2006; Sadtono, 2007 as cited in Zein, 2015). Further, introducing English to children can develop children's basic communication competence in English, encourage their enjoyment and motivation to learn the language, and develop children's cognitive skills as well as linguistic awareness that are useful for their future academic success (Pinter, 2006). Due to these reasons, many people believe that learning English early may help the growth of children's personal academic and personal development.

Despite support from the general public, there is also criticism about English learning in primary schools. The criticism mainly arises from the fear that learning English can affect the construction of children's national identity, for example, national language loss (Hadisantosa, 2010 as cited in Zein, 2017). The criticism also comes from some experts who argue that primary education should put its focus on "the development of children's character building through the dissemination of the religious and cultural values that have become the norm in Indonesia" (Zein, 2017, p. 3). The experts claim that character building is the main priority before teaching a foreign language and foreign culture (Alwasilah, 2012 as cited in Zein, 2017, p. 3). To sum up, the criticism emphasizes that constructing children's national identity is more significant than introducing them to foreign languages and cultures. However, the

criticism becomes a subject of debate among educational practitioners as well as the general public who support English for young learners (EYL) in primary schools.

Following criticism on EYL in primary schools, English learning should not be viewed negatively as the reason for distracting children's main identity. As an international language, English is one of the knowledges and skills needed by the children to prepare challenges that they are going to face in the future. EYL in primary schools can also help the children to build a basic foundation of English.

Having said that, I would not say that EYL is more important than constructing children's Indonesian identity. Indonesian identity is important to build as the children's predominant identity in society, particularly when they are interacting with foreigners. In this case, the Indonesian language as a mother language of Indonesian children may have an important role in constructing Indonesian identity. As stated by Ennaji (2005), mother tongue is used for early socialization and to define persons and groups in their specificity culture, and ideology, as well as to shape their personalities and way of thinking (p. 24). Furthermore, the mother tongue has also social functions that are basically related to identity, everyday life, family, and friends because they express people's feelings, values, aspirations, and beliefs (p. 24). Thus, constructing Indonesian identity is as important as English learning in primary schools, thus, these two subjects should be taught carefully to the children.

Constructing Indonesian identity during teaching EYL should be done appropriately. Nevertheless, constructing Indonesian identity in an EYL classroom might be very challenging since not all EYL teachers understand identity construction in EYL. As a result, many EYL teachers ignore identity construction in EYL classrooms (Dumitrašković, 2015) and put their focus on vocabulary and grammatical knowledge of the foreign language. Whereas, developing an awareness of identity and sociolinguistic differences between languages might help both teachers and students understand issues of difficulties in communication using both languages. Thus, this study is intended to study how identity is constructed in an EYL classroom.

Sarah Anisarahma, 2019

APPROPRIATING INDONESIAN IDENTITY IN AN EYL CLASSROOM AT A PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BANDUNG.

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia | repository.upi.edu | perpustakaan.upi.edu

Many studies have tried to investigate how identity is constructed in English as a second or foreign language context. However, the studies tend to be associated with identity construction related to adolescence since English is mostly studied in secondary schools, (Lobatón, 2012; Mona & Rodríguez, 2017; Lightbown & Spada, 2006 as cited in Taylor et al., 2013). However, there are also some studies which investigate how young learners construct their foreign language identity in foreign language learning context and the impact to their language acquisition (Besser & Chik, 2014; Lobatón, 2012; Mona & Rodríguez, 2017). In this case, the studies find out that foreign language learning success tends to be influenced by the motivation and social-economic status of the students.

In the Indonesian context, a qualitative study conducted by Muslim (2017) investigated the potential impact of using Indonesian narratives in English teaching on students' motivation to learn English and the development of their sense of national identity. Through analyzing 15 English textbooks which nationally distributed for secondary schools, administering questionnaire to 100 students and 20 English teachers from across Indonesia and followed by semi-structured interviews on the use of heritage narratives in the classroom, the study reveals that students' familiarity with the topic of heritage narratives can improve their language skills and motivation to learn English.

This present study, however, has two differences from the above-mentioned study in terms of its focus. First, this study was conducted in young learners' context. This scope expansion is conducted in the present study to fill the gap where the number of published studies about Indonesian identity in an EYL classroom is very limited. Further, this study puts a specific focus on the external influence on Indonesian identity construction in the EYL context. This study, then, attempts to explore a more systematic and deeper approach to "Appropriating Indonesian Identity in an EYL classroom at a Private Primary School in Bandung." This study is expected to open our

Sarah Anisarahma, 2019

APPROPRIATING INDONESIAN IDENTITY IN AN EYL CLASSROOM AT A PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BANDUNG.

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia | repository.upi.edu | perpustakaan.upi.edu

eyes about a phenomenon of English learning that occurs in a private primary school in Bandung.

1. 2 Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study was designed to explore the appropriateness of Indonesian identity in an EYL classroom. The aim of this study was to elaborate on the significant problem regarding how the aspects of Indonesian identity was explored in an EYL classroom. Thus, the study was done through a case study, so that, an in-depth understanding of the ways Indonesian identity was constructed in an EYL classroom could be explored thoroughly.

1. 3 Research Question

This study focused on exploring aspects of Indonesian identity in an EYL classroom. With the above concern in mind, this study endeavors to address the following research question:

How is Indonesian identity constructed in an EYL classroom at a private primary school?

1. 4 Scope of the Study

This study is planned to explore Indonesian identity construction in an EYL classroom. Since identity is dependent, dynamic, transformative, and changes according to social circumstances and personal convenience from one moment to another (Mona & Rodríguez, 2017), the identity construction analyzed in this study regards as contextual and is not intended for generalization as the data is only taken in one classroom at a private primary school in Bandung.

1. 5 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to give positive contributions to the development of the English curriculum at primary levels in Indonesia through theoretical and practical

Sarah Anisarahma, 2019

APPROPRIATING INDONESIAN IDENTITY IN AN EYL CLASSROOM AT A PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BANDUNG.

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia | repository.upi.edu | perpustakaan.upi.edu

contributions. For theoretical contribution, the findings of this study are expected to enrich the reference on the topic of EYL in Indonesian context, particularly for the school where this study is conducted. It also tries to reveal the current situation on Indonesian identity in the Indonesian EYL context and how it is constructed. This study is also expected to enrich the academic literature on constructing Indonesian identity in EYL context.

For practical benefit, the framework created from this research is expected to be the additional references for both education policymakers of Indonesia and related educational stakeholders as an input for a better EYL curriculum and future teachers' professional development.

1. 6 Clarification of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding, some current terms in this study are defined as follows:

- **Indonesian identity:**

-Indonesian refers to a South Asian country which consists of people from different races, ethnic and religion but united under a country name Indonesia.

-Identity is a set of self-conception, which is biologically given and naturally developed, institutionally forced, discursively recognized, and socially shared (Gee, 2000).

In this study, *Indonesian Identity* is defined as the conception of feeling or belonging to a country, named Indonesia, and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, locality, generation. Indonesian identity in this study refers to the aspect of Indonesian identity found in an EYL classroom, including the symbols, stereotypes, language, linguistic strategies, and so forth.

- **EYL classroom:**

Young learners refer to a large chronological age span from around 3 of age to 15 who have specific linguistic, social, and conceptual development (Nunan, 2010). Specifically, young learners are also defined as children whose age 6-12 years old who study at primary school (Kasihani, 2008).

Young language learners are those who are learning a foreign or second language and who are doing so during the first six or seven years of formal schooling (McKay, 2006, p. 1). In the common education system, most countries' young language learners are children who are in primary or elementary school (McKay, 2006, p. 1; Pinter, 2006, p.1). Hence, young learners referred by this study are fourth graders at the elementary school level.

A classroom is a place where more than two people gather together for the purpose of learning, with one having the role of teacher and the rest is the students (Tsui, 1995).

From the aforementioned definitions, EYL (English for Young Learners) classroom refers to a classroom that consists of 9-10 years old children who learn English as a foreign language at a primary school.

1. 7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. To begin with, chapter one presents the introduction part. It consists of the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the research question, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarifications of terms, and organization of the paper.

In chapter two, this thesis presents the theoretical foundation of the study. It contains the concept of identity in this study, identity formation, the portrait of Indonesian identity, and identity construction in a foreign language learning context. Further, this chapter also presents the definition and characteristics of young language

learners and the picture of EYL in Indonesia. The last part of this chapter is ended by previous studies and concluding remarks.

Furthermore, chapter three presents the methodology of this research. It consists of three main sub-sections. The first one is research design which covers site and participants and data collection techniques. The second sub-section is data collection which constitutes ways to collect the data needed in this study. The third subsection is data interpretation. This sub-section discusses ways to analyze the collected data. Lastly, this chapter is ended with a concluding remark.

Chapter four presents findings and discussion of the study. This chapter is divided into three subsections as well. Firstly, sub-section discusses the context of the study. In this subsection, the overview regarding the school's profile is presented. The next one is Indonesian identity in an EYL classroom which elaborates on the findings of the study. In this subsection, the findings are classified into three major findings, which are the manifestation of linguistic strategy found in the classroom, manifestation of Indonesian identity found in daily routines, and symbolic manifestation of Indonesian identity. The third one is the subsection. This sub-section presents discussion regarding the findings based on two major perspectives: Balancing identities in English learning environment and English proficiency over teaching identities. Lastly, this chapter is closed with a concluding remark. Lastly, chapter five presents the conclusion and suggestions. This chapter describes the conclusion of the study and several suggestions for the teacher, the school, and future possible research.